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James Hall Esq

A RAILROAD

FROM

L A K E S U P E R I O R

TO

T H E P A C I F I C :

THE SHORTEST, CHEAPEST AND SAFEST COMMUNICATION

F O R E U R O P E

W I T H A L L A S I A .

BY ALLAN MACDONELL.

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A RAILROAD FROM LAKE SUPERIOR TO THE PACIFIC.

To shorten, by a Western passage, the route to the Indies, which is now conducted around the fearful barriers of Cape Horn and Southern Africa, is a design that has long occupied the attention, and aroused the exertion of all maritime nations. England's exploring expeditions to both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, have pried into every sinuosity of shore, from Lat. 30, South, to the borders of the Frigid Zone, and in the defeat of her exertions, projects have been forming to pierce the Continent within the limits of a foreign country, and where England would be placed at the mercy of her rivals. Whilst France, Mexico, the United States, and other Powers meditate the separation of the Continent at the Isthmus of Panama, let England at least enquire whether she has not, within her own territories, superior facilities for accomplishing the same grand purpose which impel them.

Within this past year, three works have been published in England, emanating from different sources, urging the necessity and advantages of a Railway connection between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, such railway to be constructed through the British Possessions. My present object is not to canvas the schemes proposed by any of these several parties or projectors, whereby they would seek to carry out their views, but, if possible, to direct the attention of the Canadian public to the existence of such a project, and the incalculable advantages which must result to this and the Mother Country, could such a connection be accomplished. In one of the pamphlets referred to, by Major Smith, the plan proposed by him is to construct such road by convict labour; the others, one by a Mr. Wilson, (who, I believe, was at one time in the employment of the Hudson Bay Company) and the other by Lieut. Synge, of the Royal Engineers, I have not met with. That the construction of such a road is feasible and practicable, I have every reason to believe, and will propose to build it upon a plan similar to that proposed by Mr. Whitney, for constructing a like Railway communication through the United States,—which plan is so peculiarly adapted to our country, that it cannot fail of finding as favourable a reception here as it did there. The scheme of building a Railway for hundreds of miles through a country which at present is a wilderness, seems at first sight absurdly extravagant, as well as utterly impracticable; and so it would be if the plan contemplated was one to be fully carried out within any short period of time. It must be borne in mind that under the most favourable circumstances, some years would be required for the construction of such a work; with its progress, population must keep in advance, or accompany its advancement.

In determining, therefore, upon the wisdom or practicability of constructing such a road, the *whole matter* is to be looked at *prospectively*,—the question is not how far the present condition of the country and its interests warrant the undertaking, but whether such a state of things

will be likely to exist, as will justify it when it shall have been accomplished. As to the expediency or advantage of constructing such road, I imagine there cannot be a diversity of opinion, if it shall be found to be practicable.

Our portion of the continent of North America lies directly in the way of the commerce passing between Europe and India—with a ship canal of six hundred and thirty-eight yards around the falls (twenty-one feet in all) of the Sault de Ste Marie, we have through our own territories the most magnificent inland navigation in the world, carrying us *one half way across this continent*. By means of a Railway to the Pacific from the head of this navigation, a rapid and safe communication would be formed, by which the commerce of the world would undergo an entire change; every one must perceive at a glance, that such a road would stand unrivalled in the world. Not only are the United States, but the whole of Europe aroused to the importance of securing the immense trade of China and the East Indies—even in the days of Hernando Cortez it was thought possible and expedient to unite the two oceans by a ship canal across the Isthmus of Panama, and since that time almost every nation has talked of doing so; nor is the project at the present time abated or suspended. Even in the early history of this country, the French perseveringly, and anxiously sought for a supposed water communication from the St. Lawrence to the Pacific; with a view to secure, if possible, that important trade, which has from the earliest history enriched, beyond calculation, every nation that held it; while each in its turn has fallen from power and affluence as it lost or surrendered it. Without adverting to its effects on other nations, it is sufficient to look to England; she owes more of her grandeur and her power to her commerce with the East Indies, than to almost any other source whatever. At the present time, she is to commerce, what the principle of gravitation is to the material world—that which regulates and upholds all. And yet, should the United States construct a Railway through their territories, she might too soon feel how precarious is her tenure of the sceptre of the seas—it would be wrested from her by her active and energetic rival; she would be driven from her position, and her Indian fleets as effectively forced from the bosom of the ocean, as have been the caravans which formerly carried across the deserts the wealth of India; or, as England snatched from Holland the East Indian trade, so in her turn she may be deprived of it by the United States: such would be—such some day may be—the effect produced by a Railroad through the territories of this latter power. It is therefore incumbent upon England, for her own sake, and it becomes her duty and her interest, to enquire into the practicability of constructing such road through British dominions, whereby our active and enterprising rival will cease to be regarded as such; and a British people will have no competitor for maritime supremacy among nations. If it be practicable to connect the Pacific with the head waters of our inland navigation, it ought not to be delayed. Every facility should be offered for carrying it into effect. It would not only be the means of settling all the lands capable of sustaining population, in these regions, but the commercial relations of the world would be altered; the great west would be penetrated—the stream of commerce would be changed from boisterous seas and stormy capes, to flow to our shores upon the Pacific, and through the depths of our Western wilds. With the power of steam through an accessible of region and over a peaceful sea, England would be placed at one-fourth of the distance at which she has hitherto stood from the treasures of the East; her merchants would be able to undersell, in their own ports, all the nations of the world. In other words, she would render commerce tributary to them, and Canada would be

The great toll-gate through which this enormous traffic must pass. No other route across the Continent of America could compete with this, as will be shown hereafter; at present, I shall simply point out the route proposed:—

Liverpool to St. Lawrence, (miles).....	2,800
St. Lawrence to British boundary, Lake Superior.....	1,150
Lake Superior to Fuca's Straits.....	1,500
	5,450

The distance from Fuca's Straits to Japan is about 4,000 miles; to Shanghai about 5,000. Vancouver's Island commands the Straits, and abounds with excellent harbours; coal of a superior quality is found there; the Indians mine it and deliver it on board the Hudson Bay Steamers at a mere nominal charge. No part of the Pacific coast affords such capabilities as does this for controlling the whole trade and traffic of the Pacific.

It might be assumed as a certainty, that a cargo from Shanghai, borne by a modern ocean steamer, over this placid sea, could be unloaded in 15 or 20 days, at some one of the harbours at Fuca's Straits, and in from three to five days more placed, for sale or transportation, on the banks of Lake Superior. The construction of such a road, in the direction of Fuca's Straits, would shorten the distance to England from China, &c., by 60 or 70 days, and place before us a mart of six hundred millions of people, and enable us geographically to command them. Leaving it to the guidance of commercial interests, who shall tell what may not be the commercial destiny of this country?

This scheme may excite only the curiosity of those who can hardly contemplate it as anything else than an hallucination to amuse for a moment, and then vanish. Nevertheless, such a work will some day be achieved,—if not by a British people, by our neighbours. And let it be remembered, that it is no difficult matter to open a new channel for a new trade, but it is very difficult to change one that is already established.

There is something startling in the proposition of a Railroad to connect the Atlantic and Pacific, and much that will strike the hasty observer as chimerical, but when we have seen stupendous pyramids raised by the hand of man in the midst of a desert of shifting sands; when we know that despite the obstacles of nature and the rudeness of art a semi-barbarous people centuries before the christian era, erected around their empire a solid barrier of wall, carrying it over the most formidable mountains, and across rivers on arches, and through the declensions and sinuosities of valleys to the distance of fifteen hundred miles, let us not insult the enterprize of this enlightened age by denouncing as visionary and impracticable the plan of a simple line of rails over a surface of no greater extent without one-half the natural obstacles to overcome. To do so would evince a forgetfulness of the vast achievements of this age. As to its feasibility, I am aware, many will object to it on that ground. Nevertheless, from all the information obtained, I believe that it is practicable and easy of accomplishment, and that it can be accomplished by individual enterprize; by connecting the sale and the settlement of the lands on its line, with the building of the road, population must keep pace with the work and be interested in it, and the labour of grading, &c., must pay in part for the land and make homes for the settlers. The plan or mode of operation by which it is proposed to carry out this great work, is that the Government shall sell, to a chartered company, '60 miles wide of the lands from the Lake to the Pacific, at a reduced rate, or at such rate as the Government shall pay for obtaining the sur-

render to the Crown, from the various bands of Indians now possessing it. At present it is a wilderness, and although, to a great extent, it is capable of sustaining a large population, yet it must lie waste and unprofitable whilst thousands of our fellow countrymen are starving and destitute; and so it must remain without value and impossible of settlement, unless some move be made which shall create facilities which will afford the means of settling these lands and thus make them a source of wealth and power to the country. Immediately after such surrender to the Crown, of 100 or 200 miles or more, the route upon it would be surveyed and located, preparations made for grading, &c., and proceeding with the work, a large body of workmen or settlers at once placed upon it; when ten miles of the road shall have been completed, in the most substantial and approved manner, and to the satisfaction of a commissioner appointed by Government, a patent shall issue to the Company for the first half of the road or five miles, or patents to the settlers who may have purchased upon the line, as may be deemed most advisable; the Government thus holding still one-half and the road. Now, if the sale of land could not be made to produce a sufficient amount to return the money expended on the ten miles of road, then the experiment is the loss of the Company, and the Government would not have lost one shilling, but on the contrary, the five miles of road held by it, must be enhanced in value; if upon the contrary, the land is raised from beyond its present value to an amount exceeding the outlay, then the half held by Government would have imparted to it an equal increase in value from the same causes, and this ought to be a sufficient security for the due performance of the work. Such should be the proceeding throughout the good or available lands upon the route; but as the road for an immense distance may pass through poor and barren lands—in such case, as much of the nearest good lands beyond the line finished as may cover the outlay upon such line or section, may be sold by the Company, and patents issued; and when all shall have been completed, the title of the road should vest in the Company, subject to the control of Government, in regulating and fixing tolls, &c. Should the plan fail, Government can lose nothing, because the lands still remain, and their value will have been added to, even by the failure. Thus it is proposed to establish an entirely new system of settlement, on which the hopes for success are based and on which all depend. The settler on the line of road would, so soon as his house or cabin was up and a crop in, find employment upon the road; when his crop would have ripened, there would be a market at his door, created by those in the same situation as his was the season before, and if he had in the first instance paid for his land, the money would go back to him either directly or indirectly for labour and materials furnished for the work, so in one year the settler would have his home, with settlement and civilization surrounding him, a demand for his labour, a market at his door, and, for any surplus of his produce, a Railroad to communicate with other markets. The settler who might not have the means to purchase land even at the lowest price, say 3s. 9d. per acre, would obtain those means by his labour on the road and a first crop—he too in one year would have his home, with the same advantages and be as equally independent.

Settlers under any other circumstances, placed in a wilderness remote from civilization, would have no benefit from the sum paid, beyond his title to the land,—his house built and crop in, he finds no demand for his labour, because all around him are in the same condition as himself; when his crop is grown he has no market; his labour, it is true, produces food from the earth, but he cannot exchange it for other different products of industry. A proper and systematic course adopted for inducing immigration from the mother country, would relieve her of a surplus

population; open the greatest possible extent of wilderness, otherwise forever useless, to settlement and production; making it the means of benefiting and carrying comfort and happiness to thousands of our fellow-subjects in the mother country, suffering the worst of evils caused by a too dense population, whilst at the same time such immigration will benefit this country to an illimitable extent. Perhaps it may be thought that the Government of the country should undertake this work, and dispose of the lands as proposed. Private enterprize far exceeds any operations of the Government in celerity, and is much more economical and effective. If the Government undertook it, the sale of the lands would never meet the disbursement, and the difficulties to be encountered by delays in the transaction of the business of the Seat of Government, would alone retard the work and cause it to linger until it perished. Such a work by Government would absorb the entire legislation of the country, and being subject to changes of management and direction at each session, its progress would be utterly defeated; the management of such a great work, and the amount of money which this plan would place as a stake to be carried off by the successful party in the struggle, would lead to every species of political corruption and bargaining to secure so vast a prize, which of itself would preclude the selection of the men of the character requisite to carry out the plan; each administration would appoint its own partizans as directors, who would exert all the influence that their position and the immense means at their command would give them, to sustain in power those on whom their offices depended. The only true way of carrying out this work is by private enterprize connected with the sale of the lands, under the protection of Government; or else it must be accomplished by the Imperial Government alone.

The commencement of this work would make it a point of attraction to the whole population of Europe, daily flocking to American shores; most of these are generally without means—nevertheless their labour is the capital which would grade the road, and pay in part for the land. They would not only be interested in the road, as a means for their daily bread, but would be sure that its results would benefit their condition, and elevate themselves and families to affluence. Civilization, with all its influences, would march, step by step, with the road, and would draw to it, after the first two years, 100,000 souls annually. Cities, towns and villages would spring up like magic, because the road—the cheap means for the transit of the products of man's labour to a market—would leave a rich reward for that labour, and as it proceeded produce the further means for the completion of all. The Government in exchange for the substratum of a suffering population of indigent emigrants of the mother country would find its broad and fertile western territory sprinkled with hamlets and possessing a class of intelligent and happy husbandmen the best pride and boast of a free country.

It will be at once perceived, that the plan proposed is based upon the assumption that a great portion of the country through which such Railway might pass, is capable of sustaining a large population, and also of furnishing the means of carrying the work over such portions of the line as should be found barren or unfitted for the abode of civilized man.

I propose now to show that such a description of favourable country exists, to an almost unlimited extent, and that westward we have a vast wilderness of land which only requires the application of the labour of the now destitute, to produce abundant means for achieving this great work, richly reward that labour, and open out almost a new world as the inheritance of a British people. I might speculate upon the future, and predict what would be the vast, the mighty results by the accomplishment of this work, but it is my object to give a plain statement which I

believe to be based on facts of the features of the country. There are two points upon Lake Superior from which such Railway might be commenced, each line striking the same point at the Lac La Pluie, a distance of about 125 miles, thence to the Lake of the Woods. The one starting at Pigeon River, perhaps, is a more direct route, and I believe in many respects the better one; the other starts from the Kaministquaioa, at the mouth of which stands the Hudson Bay Company's Establishment—Fort William. I will suppose that this latter route is followed, because, without merely asserting my own views and opinions as to its capability of sustaining an agricultural population, I can quote from the published work of another, showing the description and character of country through which I propose to pass, proving that at the moment of leaving the shores of Lake Superior we enter a country capable of providing for men all those necessities and comforts which civilization requires. The Kaministquaioa is a large and fine river, but at the distance of about 30 miles up, navigation is obstructed by the Kakabeka Falls, a fall of about 140 feet; the banks of the river are clothed with elm, birch and maple; above the falls the river is again navigable, to the height of land which is reached in little over a day's travel by canoes.

The valley of this river is described by Sir George Simpson in his overland journey, and he says:—

“One cannot pass through this fair valley, without feeling that it is destined sooner or later to become the happy home of civilized men, with their bleating flocks and lowing herds, with their schools and churches, with their full garners and their social hearths. At the time of our visit, the great obstacle in the way of so blessed a consummation, was the hopeless wilderness to the eastward, which seemed to bar forever the march of settlement and cultivation. But that very wilderness, now that it is to yield up its long hidden stores, bids fair to remove the very impediments which hitherto it has itself presented. The mines of Lake Superior, besides establishing a continuity of route between the east and west, will find their nearest and cheapest supply of agricultural produce in the Valley of the Kaministquaioa.”

Through the valley to the height of land, there exist no obstructions which cannot be readily overcome—from this height of land descending to the level of the beautiful lake of the Thousand Islands, thence to Lac La Pluie and the Lake of the Woods. In reference to this portion Sir George Simpson says:—“The river which empties Lac La Pluie into the Lake of the Woods, is decidedly the finest stream on the whole route in more than one respect, from Fort Francis (situated on Lac La Pluie) downward a stretch of nearly a hundred miles, it is not interrupted by a single impediment, while yet the current is not strong enough to retard an ascending traveller, nor are the banks less favourable to agriculture than the waters themselves to navigation; resembling the Thames near Richmond—from the very bank of the river there rises a gentle slope of green sward, crowned in many places with a plentiful growth of birch, poplar, beech, elm, and oak; is it too much for the eye of philanthropy to discern through the vista of futurity this noble stream, connecting as it does, the fertile shores of two spacious lakes, with crowded steamboats on its bosom, and populous towns upon its borders. The shores of this latter lake are not less fertile than the other, producing rice in abundance and bring maize to perfection.” The Lake of the Woods is connected again by a magnificent river 300 miles in length, (the Winnipeg) with the lake of that name lying to the north-west of the Lake of the Woods—these lakes, with others, being wholly within our own boundaries—the Lake of the Woods is about 80 miles long by 40 broad; Lake Winnipeg is 230 long and 100 broad. The country in which these lakes are

situated is called the Assiniboin, across which flows the Red River, emptying into Lake Winnipeg; upon this river is established the colony founded by Lord Selkirk. From the western side of the Lake of the Woods, the Winnipeg River, or Lake Winnipeg, comprising a distance of near 300 miles, any point may be taken, and running directly west, not a single obstruction offers for carrying a Railroad to the very foot of the Rocky Mountains, a distance of 800 miles, carrying us through this magnificent country—the Assiniboin, watered by the river of its own name and by the Red River, each flowing for hundreds of miles, further westward still, we pass through the Saskatchewan country, through which flows the river of that name for 600 miles, navigable for large boats, &c.

Loaded carts traverse this immense country in every direction, and as a proof of how easily all this is accomplished, Sir George Simpson travelled over 600 miles of these plains in 13 days, with 50 horses and loaded carts, and frequently caravans of 200 and 300 carts are traversing these plains, bearing the hunters, with their families and equipages, in pursuit of the buffalo, thousands of which animals are destroyed merely for their hides. Sir George Simpson says he has seen ten thousand carcasses lying putrid and infecting the air for miles around, in one bed of the valley of the Saskatchewan. The valley of that river alone is equal to the extent of all England; it abounds in mineral, and, above all the blessings and advantages that can be conferred upon a country like this, is, that coal is abundant, and easily obtained; it crops out in various parts of the valley. Speaking of some portions of this country, through which he was travelling, he says:—"The scenery of the day had been generally a perfect level; on the east, north, and south, there was not a mound or tree to vary the vast expanse of green sward, whilst to the west were the gleaming bays of the winding Assiniboin, separated from each other by wooded points of considerable depth." Again—"The rankness of the vegetation savoured rather of the torrid zone, with its perennial spring, than of the northern wilds, brushing the luxuriant grass with our knees, and the hard ground of the surface was beautifully diversified with a variety of flowers, such as the rose, hyacinthe, and tiger lily." Of the Red River Settlement (in the Assiniboin country) he says: "The soil is a black mould, producing extraordinary crops, the wheat produced is plump and heavy; the soil frequently producing 40 bushels to the acre—grain of all kinds is raised in abundance, beef, mutton, pork, butter, cheese, and wool, are productions which likewise abound, thus showing that to the foot of the Rocky Mountains, lies a country capable of being rendered the happy homes of millions of inhabitants, when facilities of communication shall be offered which can lead to it." To these statements of Sir George Simpson, might be added those of many others, in corroboration, were it necessary.

That the Rocky Mountains will present a formidable barrier to the construction of a Railway to the Pacific cannot be denied; nevertheless I imagine that at the present day, there can scarcely be found any one so bold or rash as to assert, that obstructions will be found to exist which neither the science, skill, nor energy of man can overcome. Let immigration once reach the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, and speedily would vanish all the most formidable obstacles which may now appear to present themselves.

Even now, there are several passes known through those mountains, whereby it may be practicable to carry steam to the western side. The goods and merchandize required by the Hudson Bay Company for carrying on their trade in the interior, often being landed on the shores of the Pacific, are transported through some of these passes to the eastern side.

In his overland journey, Sir George Simpson ascended from the eastern, crossed, and descended to the Columbia river upon the western side, with forty-five pack-horses, in six or seven days, some days making forty miles a day.

Sir Alexander McKenzie, (at a pass further north) ascended the principal water of the McKenzie river to its head, which he found to be a small lake ; he crossed a beaten track leading over a low ridge of eight hundred and seventeen paces in length to another lake ; this was the head water of Fraser's river, which he followed down to where it discharges itself in the Georgian Gulf or Fuca Straits at 49° , thus showing that a communication between the east and west is open to us. In lat. $52\frac{1}{2}$, is also a pass affording facility of communication by the head waters of the Columbia and the north branches of the Saskatchewan ; up to this point, boats ascend from Fort Colville, which is in latitude about $48\frac{1}{2}$.

Wherever the head waters of the rivers on the east and west sides of the Rocky Mountains approach each other, there have been found passes through them.

The Rocky Mountains have been crossed by waggons at various points to the Columbia River, and to the Saptin or southern branch of that river and to the Wallawalla. Thomas P. Farnham, in 1840, crossed to the mouth of the Columbia, and found a waggon which had been run to the Saptin by an American missionary from Connecticut, and left there under the impression that it could be carried no further through the mountains ; but very soon after that, emigrants going out to Oregon, in 1843, crossed the Rocky Mountains to the Columbia with fifty loaded waggons, performing the journey without any loss or injury save the bursting of one waggon tire ; and that ought to be sufficient to convince the most sceptical, that a Railroad to, and through the Rocky Mountains, is practicable beyond a doubt, and affording reason to believe that, upon a careful preparatory survey, which must be instituted, new passes through these mountains may be found adapted to the work within our own limits, and on a more direct line with the commodious harbours upon Fuca Straits.

One of the projected lines of Railway communication through the United States was proposed should terminate at Puget Sound. Colonel Fremont, one of the most scientific men in the United States, was directed to examine and report upon the feasibility of crossing the Rocky Mountains to such terminus. $48\frac{1}{2}$ N. lat. he examined, and reported its feasibility, stating that "*impracticability is not to be named with the subject*," either at that point, or even to carry it to San Francisco ; "that difficulties from snow would be confined to short spaces, and these inconsiderable."

With reference to the country upon the western side of the mountains, within our boundaries, none perhaps is so well situated for communicating with all the countries and ports washed by the waters of the Pacific. Fuca Straits and the Georgian Sound abound with excellent harbours, without obstruction to ingress or egress at any season of the year ; are unsurpassed for salubrity of climate, and for advantages are equal to any other country, whether considered under the head of agriculture, commerce, or even the capabilities of becoming a manufacturing one. It holds that position with regard to the Pacific and its islands, which must make it a ruler of its commerce ; and when a direct communication shall have been opened from the eastern side of the continent, it must receive the aid of capital and immigration, and rise speedily to an importance scarcely to be paralleled.

The Rev. C. G. Nicolay says of this country :—“The growth of timber of all sorts, in the neighbourhood of the De Fuca Straits, adds much to its value as a naval station. Coal is found in the whole western district, but principally shows itself above the surface on the north side of

Vancouver's Island. To these sources of commercial wealth, must be added the minerals : iron, lead, tin, &c.; and limestone is plentiful in the north. It will be found to fall short of few countries, either in salubrity of climate, fertility of soil, and consequent luxuriance of vegetation and utility of productions ; or in the picturesque character of the country."

Thus far, I have endeavoured to show the feasibility and expediency of constructing a Railway to the Pacific, through British territories. I may have failed in interesting readers in it sufficiently to excite the feeling to exert an influence on the accomplishment of so great a work. Our geographical position gives us advantages and facilities for carrying it out, which *no other country* possesses. We are placed so far north that the climate would protect animal and vegetable productions from injury and destruction, and where the soil, for nearly the entire route, would be capable of sustaining population ; thereby opening to settlement and production, the greatest possible extent of wilderness, otherwise forever useless. It is a subject of wide national interest ; one of universal benevolence, opening to mankind the now uncultivated portions of an immense country, to the superabundant population of the Old World, building cities upon the silent shores of the Pacific, and growing corn upon the unfrodden slopes of the Rocky Mountains. I am aware that many will be found, who will urge the impossibility, and unhesitatingly assert that such a work is impracticable. There never yet was any great work projected, which did not meet with its cavillers or opponents. To such I would reply, there is no work, no enterprise, too vast, too magnificent, if dependent alone upon the labour of man for its accomplishment, aided by the science and skill of the present day.

Within but a short time, we have seen a body of 20,000 Mormons traverse a wilderness of 1200 miles, and, seating themselves at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, in one year place themselves in a most prosperous and flourishing condition : building up cities, and, in fact, acquiring the position of an independent state ; who shall tell us, then, that an extensive and systematic immigration to the fertile lands west of Lake Superior, cannot become equally flourishing, prosperous and happy. If in the plan proposed there is any merit, it is to be ascribed to Mr. Whitney, of New York. It originated with him, and has become the foundation for many to build upon. In the United States, no less than six or seven different projects were brought forward, giving rise to sectional prejudices, and creating diverse interests, which has chiefly been the cause that none of the projected railways have been commenced, unless the one at Panama. Setting aside the advantages to be derived by this country in opening to immigration our western wilds, it will be well to consider whether it is possible, and if possible, whether some one of the projected routes through the United States be likely to be commenced or built, which would be the means of rendering one through our territories useless, for the purposes of controlling the trade of India, &c. I propose to show that not even a ship canal across the Isthmus of Panama, can compete with a communication by the head waters of Lake Superior and the Pacific.

The various routes advocated in the United States, for the construction of a Railway communication connecting the Atlantic and Pacific, are :—

1st. That termed the northern route, from Lake Michigan, terminating at Puget Sound.

2nd. A route from some point upon the Missouri, terminating at the mouth of the Columbia.

3rd. A route from St. Louis, terminating at San Francisco.

4th. A route from St. Louis, by way of the Gila, terminating at San Diego.

5th. A route from New Orleans across Texas.

6th. Over the Isthmus of Panama, by railroad.

7th. By Tehuantepec or Nicaragua, by ship canal.

The first or northern route is that projected by Mr. Whitney, who explored and examined the country westward of the Lakes Michigan and Superior, for a distance of 800 miles, and compared with the other lines, it has been found to possess the greatest advantages; it pursued a course along 48 $\frac{1}{2}$ degrees of north latitude, until it terminated at Puget Sound. It was found that thus keeping so far to the North, better lands were offered suitable for agriculture, timber more readily obtained, less difficulty in surmounting the hills, and all the large rivers in a measure avoided, inasmuch as only the head waters of these would be crossed, besides, the distance by this route, 1800 miles, being from 300 to 500 shorter than the others, and the fact that at Puget Sound there always could be obtained supplies of coal from the adjoining British possessions at Fuca Straits. That this or no other particular route has been decided upon by the United States is, I believe, to be solely attributed to the sectional jealousies which the other proposed routes have created, the interests of those advocating the others, requiring a more southerly route, all being actuated by a fear that their section of their country would not secure its full benefits certain to follow from it. In as great a degree as this proposed northern route has advantages over all the others, so would one through British possessions possess advantages over it.

The more southern lines are all alike liable to the same or similar objections. They would cross a much greater extent of country, where the altitude of the mountains is much greater, and large rivers must be crossed, as well as immense tracts of sterile lands which cannot be inhabited; and the want of coal or fuel throughout a very large portion of the line, and at the terminus upon the Pacific, must preclude anything like competition with one through British territories where the distance is so very much shortened, where there are less difficulties to overcome, and where the line would pass through some of the best lands in the western country, possessing a fine and healthful climate, and the greater part of which country may be densely populated.

The great barriers upon the American routes, are upon the one proposed through British possessions, modified or made clear by nature, and above all through the Valley of the Saskatchewan, and at the terminus at Fuca Straits abundance of coal is at hand.

A canal across the Isthmus of Panama, at Nicaragua or Tehuantepec, has been mooted for near 200 years; surveys and explorations have been made, but it all rests where it commenced. It is true that this Isthmus forms but a narrow barrier between the two great oceans of the world, nevertheless there are innumerable obstacles in the way of its becoming the best, cheapest, or quietest route between Europe and Asia.

It is far from being among the most serious objections that the Isthmus of Panama is without harbours upon either side, with shoals and shallow waters difficult of access from either ocean, situated in the latitude subject to calms, squalls, and tornados; the climate unhealthy in the extreme, nine months in the year subject to excessive torrents of rain, and the thermometer ranging from 82° to 88°, and the other three months from 90° to 95°, a temperature and climate certain to destroy all animal and vegetable production, and also to injure greatly all manufactured goods.

In a transportation by Railway across the Isthmus of Panama steam must be used; depots of coal must become necessary, transported from an immense distance upon the Atlantic side, consequently the rate of freights must be so great as to preclude the transmission of merchandise. Upon the Pacific side depots of coal would become necessary at the Sandwich Islands or at the Marquesas or Society Islands;

the distance from Panama to China, being over 9000 miles, what steamer could carry freight in addition to her necessary fuel? For such route the cost of the quantity of fuel to be placed at such depots, (a large portion, if not all of it, would most likely be brought from Fuca Straits,) would render the undertaking so unprofitable that it could not compete with the old route around the Cape. Again, the route across the Pacific from Panama, offers many difficulties to sailing vessels in the prevailing winds, calms, &c., so much so that even a vessel might pass round the Cape to China in a shorter space of time than from Panama.

If these objections were not sufficient of themselves to settle the question as to the advantages of the routes across the Isthmus of Panama, *the distance gained by a route from the head of Lake Superior to Fuca Straits will*.

Many, perhaps, who have not reflected upon our position with regard to China, will be surprised to know that here, in Toronto, we are upwards of two thousand miles nearer to Canton, than is the *Isthmus of Panama* to that place; consequently, that through Canada, England can reach the great marts of Asia by a much shorter route than by any other.

Supposing that a ship canal was completed across the *Isthmus of Panama*, thereby obviating the necessary delays and heavy expenses of transhipment and transit upon a railway, &c., and the steamers passing through that canal of sufficient capacity to carry the fuel required for 9,000 miles, still neither distance nor time can be diminished. Let any one take the map of the world, he will see upon one side of us Europe at a distance of some 3,000 miles; upon the other, Asia at a distance of some 5,000 miles. A line drawn from the great European to the Asiatic marts, passes through our great lakes and across Canada; as we are thus placed in the centre, so may we become the thoroughfare of both.

From London to Panama, 81° of longitude and 42° of latitude must be overcome, which in a straight line, would vary little from	5,868 miles.
From Panama to Canton, 170° of longitude is to be overcome, measuring 60 miles to a degree.....	10,200 "
	16,068 "
London to Quebec	2,800
Quebec to Pigeon River, Lake Superior....	1,150
Pigeon River to Fuca Straits	1,500
Fuca Straits to Canton	5,400
	10,850 "
Difference in favour of route through Canada	5,218 "

This, most likely, will strike one as incredible, nevertheless it will be found not very far wrong; and even a much greater difference in favour of Fuca Straits will be found to exist when *actual sailing distance* is compared, ships often being obliged to run down far to the south or keep up far to the north to catch the winds.

It will be seen that in crossing the globe within the tropics, the degrees of longitude measures full 60 miles, where on a course from a point at 30° on a line to 60° latitude, measures but 47 miles to the degree.

	Miles.		Miles.
Panama to Japan.....	7,600	Fuca Straits to Japan.....	4,000
Panama to Shangee....	10,600	Fuca Straits to Shangee..	5,000
Panama to Singapore ..	10,600	Fuca Straits to Singapore..	7,000
Panama to the Sandwich Islands	3,400	Fuca Straits to the Sandwich Islands.....	2,400
Panama to Australia ..	6,460	Fuca Straits to Australia ..	6,000

As to the advantages of the respective routes, comments are unnecessary, figures and facts settle the question; looking again to the terminus at Fuca Straits, we find advantages as to harbours, climate and position,

in a degree commensurate to the disadvantages of Panama, and for steamers abundance of coal; the islands of Japan also abound in coal, where supplies can be had, and if necessary, depots might be made upon the Aleutian Isles; no sea is so remarkably adapted to steam navigation as the Pacific, its tranquil surface is scarcely ever agitated by a storm. For sailing vessels, Fuca Straits is equally advantageous, easy of access at all seasons of the year, being out of the latitudes of the prevailing calms; the passage could be made out and back with the trades; the course to the great commercial marts of Asia would be west of south, and the north-east trade winds blow almost uninterruptedly, returning by a more northerly route, advantage would be taken of the polar currents which set northward towards Bering Straits, and also of the more variable winds in higher latitudes.

I have thus endeavoured to compare with each other, the different routes proposed for this great highway of the world, to explain the plan by which it is proposed to accomplish it, and to show that the very route which circumstances force us to take, is the only route suitable for the accomplishment of such a magnificent work. British capitalists, it appears, are ready to give their aid towards the construction of a similar communication across the Isthmus of Panama; where must be incurred a much greater expenditure of money than would serve to build the Railway within our own territories, and, even then, unless nature herself can be overcome, they cannot attain their object; whilst here, nature invites the enterprise, and where they have no favours to ask of foreign nations, where they will have security that *the way shall never be closed to the enterprise* of the British merchant, and whereby her possessions upon the Pacific will be secured to Britain for all time to come, and be an additional guarantee for the perpetuity of her dominion upon this continent, it would create a union among all her people which could not be dissolved, with the trade of the world her own forever; cemented by the affections and undivided interests of her subjects in Europe and in Asia, by means of her Canadian Empire, bound together with sinews of iron.

The view that this opens upon the mind, independent of its internal benefits, staggers speculation with its immensity, and stretches beyond all ordinary rules of calculation. The riches of the most unlimited market in the world would be thrown open to it; and, obeying the new impulse thus imparted to it, England's commerce would increase until every billow between us and China bore her meteor flag. By the superior facilities conferred upon us, by our position to control the whole Pacific, and the route through our own country, we would become the common carrier of the world.

Again: Vast countries still lie in the fairy regions of the *East*, the productions and resources of which are scarcely known to us, and only await the civilising influence of such a scheme as this, to throw down the barriers of prejudice and superstition. Of this nature and character is the opulent empire of Japan. Though second but to China itself, it holds no intercourse with foreigners, and only permits one nation to land upon its dominions (the Dutch). Ought it to be too much to hope that thus being brought so near to us, some diplomacy or commercial interests would throw its rich markets open to our enterprise.

The cost of the work, even though it should amount to a hundred millions, is no argument to urge against the undertaking which would render every nation on the globe our commercial tributaries. But this is a most extravagant estimate. It would scarcely amount to eight millions, less, indeed, than would be required to cut a canal across the Isthmus of Panama, as is proposed, entailing, perhaps, upon England, some future war, to maintain the rights of her subjects in using such canal, the expenses of which would build a dozen railways; a war that might leave England enfeebled, exhausted, and depressed. The com-

pletion of the proposed Railway through British possessions, would find her regenerated with new life, her impulses reawakened, her energies strengthened, and advancing with a rapidity and vigour that would astonish Destiny herself.

The distance from the head of Lake Superior to the Pacific being about 1,500 miles, then allow for detours and crossing the Rocky Mountains, say 250 miles, making in all 1750.

To construct such a road would cost about £5,000 per mile, making a total of £8,750,000.

From the point where it might start upon Lake Superior to Lac la Pluie, would be the most expensive portion upon this side of the Rocky Mountains; from Lac la Pluie onward, the land is of the best quality for the production of food for man, well watered, covered with rich grass, &c. The farmer wants but the plough, the seed, the scythe and the sickle; at the above rate, ten miles of railway would cost £50,000. Five miles by sixty contain 192,000 acres, the whole of this sold at say 5s. per acre, would not produce the sum required for the bare expense of building, thereby showing that the request made for 60 miles is not unreasonable.

Without directing attention to the trade carried on throughout the Pacific, by France, by Holland and other continental nations, and also by the United States, let us look only to England, it will afford some idea of the incalculable advantages which such a communication would open out through this country.

Imports into Great Britain from the following ports:

From Bengal, Madras and Bombay, as taken from

Hunt's Merchant's Magazine for March, 1843, including all to Continental Europe, and North and South

America, annually	£12,000,000
Less for the amount to France and America	2,489,340

£ 9,510,660

From Sumatra and Java (commercial tariff, part 6) ..	215,216
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The Philippine Isles.....	346,692
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New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, (table of revenue, part 12, page 474)	1,118,088
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Mauritus, (table of revenue, part 12)	806,593
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Chili, estimated at	1,500,000
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Peru, estimated at	1,000,000
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£14,497,240

From China the total amount of various productions, teas, silks, &c.....	5,000,000
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£19,497,240

To which must be added the exports from Great Britain, which are sent in exchange for the above productions. The imports and exports of the Dutch East Indies and the French East Indies, should also be considered, as also the exports and imports of the United States, all would be tributary to such a road.

The Imperial Government have contracted to pay, per annum, for the transmission of a Monthly Mail to Chagres.....	£250,000
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And from Panama to Callao, for communicating with the Navy and Officers in the Pacific	20,000
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£270,000

Having thus alluded to the importance to be attached to the opening of such a communication as proposed with the Pacific, and to the com-

parative advantages, in a strictly commercial point of view, between it and the Isthmus of Panama, it may not be inappropriate to again advert to it, as regards the effect the constructing of a canal at the latter would have upon England's maritime supremacy.

As early as the seventeenth century, a company projected by William Patterson, was formed in Scotland, to improve the advantages offered by the Isthmus of Darien, £700,000 was raised, and 1200 men set sail to found a colony, but being denounced by Government, and attacked by a Spanish force, they sank under accumulated misfortunes, and abandoned the enterprise in despair. The project seems to be again revived, and a Company is now forming in London to carry out the scheme of a ship canal by means of British capital, an almost suicidal act to England's supremacy on the seas, for it would thus contribute to afford superior facilities and advantages to other nations, and particularly to her enterprising rival the United States, from whose rapid strides towards maritime equality England has much to fear. Through her geographical position the United States can more readily avail herself of the benefits to be derived from this course than any other nation. Her fleets would steam in one unbroken line through the Gulf of Mexico; her naval power would over-awe our settlements upon the north-west coasts; and her influence extend itself throughout all our Indian possessions. The Marquesas Islands in case the project be carried into effect, lying directly in the route of the navigation to India, would at a step advance into one of the most important maritime ports in the world, whilst the Society Islands, also in the possession of France, would enhance immensely in their value, more than all, returning back, the vessels of all Europe would 'ere long procure their tropical productions from the newly awakened Islands in the Pacific Ocean, in just the degree that their value would increase the West India possessions would depreciate. By changing the route through the Isthmus of Panama, England would voluntary resign into other hands these commanding maritime and naval stations which she has won at the expense of so much diplomacy, perseverance and wealth. The power and advantages of Saint Helena, Mauritius, Capetown, and the Falkland Islands, commanding the passage round Cape Horn, would be transferred to New Orleans and other Cities of the United States bordering upon the Gulf of Mexico, to Cuba, Chagres, Panama, and the Marquesas Islands.

By the present route around the Cape of Good Hope and through the Isthmus of Suez, she has a fair start with the best, and superior chance over most other nations for the Indies, and while her established power and superior marine in that region secures a preponderence in trade, better let well alone, unless she can gain superior advantage.

The commerce of India in every age has been the source of the opulence and power of every nation that has possessed it; by a silent and almost imperceptible operation, India has been through centuries the secret but active source of the advance of mankind, and while lying apparently inert in her voluptuous clime, has changed the maritime balances of Europe with the visit of every people that has sought the riches of her shores. Her trade imparted the first great impulse to drowsy and timid navigation, it revealed in the direction of its coasts, region after region before unknown. Like the Genii in the fable, it still offers the casket and the sceptre to those who unintimidated by the terrors that surround it, are bold enough to adventure to its embrace. In turn Phœnicia, Carthage, Greece, Rome, Venice, Pisa, Genoa, Portugal, Holland, and lastly England, has won and wore this ocean diadem; Destiny now offers it to us.